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ABSTRACT

Attitudinal factors that hinder the economic and social advancement of women were investigated. Graduate students between the ages of 20 and 50 and enrolled in two southern institutions of higher learning were administered the Dolly-Bell Sex Discrimination Scale: Social and Economic Factors. Results indicate that sex discrimination is determined by a variety of factors. Prejudicial attitudes toward women are indicative of the threat perceived by subgroups in the population. No subgroup strongly disagreed with encouraging little girls to be assertive. However, males, particularly black males, reacted strongly to items indicating the independence or supervisory ability of women. Results suggest that efforts to combat attitudes hindering economic advancement of women should be designed for the particular subgroup and should deal with the threat perceived as a result of economic role change for women. (Author/BEF)

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Attitudes Toward Changing Economic and Social Roles for Women

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Attitudes Toward Changing Economic and Social Roles for Women

Margaret E. Bell, John P. Dolly, and Terry Helsley

Prejudice and discrimination contribute to individual loss of esteem and particularly to economic and social inequality. Although legislation and affirmative action policies are attempting to provide equality of opportunity, the number of women in responsible positions is in fact decreasing (Tsuchigane and Dodge, 1974; Chronicle of Higher Education, 1977).

Economic advancement for women brings with it actual and/or perceived role change. If women are to achieve economic equality, then the attitudinal factors that prevent their advancement must be identified. Prior studies, however, have not investigated attitudes toward changed economic and social status for women. Instead, prior studies have focused on general topics such as attitudes toward women managers (Peters, Torberg, and Taynor, 1974), the degree of sex attribution (Zelder and Greenberg, 1976), and sex role stereotyping (Bem, 1974). In contrast, the major purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudinal factors that hinder the economic and therefore, social advancement of women.

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Hypotheses

In order to determine the nature of prejudice toward economic advancement for women, it is important to identify the reactions of subgroups to changing female roles. Therefore, the first hypothesis is that there will be no significant difference between white males, white females, black males, and black females in the prejudice exhibited toward female status change.

Hypothesis two deals with subject responses to the two major scale factors previously identified for the instrument. Specificially, the hypothesis tested is that there will be no significant differences in the responses of white males, white females, black males, or black females to the factors "Changes in the 'status quo'" and "Female Aspirations." Although the previous data analysis identified two other factors ("Professional Equality" and "Leadership Roles"), these factors included fewer than six test items. Therefore, they were not of sufficient magnitude to be subjected to an analysis of differences in subject responses.

Method

Sample

The sample used in the study was composed of 86 graduate students enrolled at two southern institutions of higher learning. Demographic data collected on the subjects indicate an age range from 20 to 50.

Sixty-seven percent of the sample was under 30, and thirty-three percent of the sample was 30 or above. Males comprised 30.23 of the sample (N=26) with females comprising sixty percent (N=60). Fifty-three of the respondents in the sample were white (61.62%) and 38

respondents (38.37%) were black. With regard to geographic area lived in the longest, 80 of the respondents (93.02%) were from the southeastern region of the United States.

Instrument

The instrument used in the study, the Dolly-Bell Sex Discrimination Scale: Social and Economic Factors, is a Likert-type scale with six alternatives per item; strong agreement, moderate agreement, slight disagreement, moderate disagreement, and strong disagreement. The twenty-two items on the scale measure attitudes toward changing economic and social roles for women, e.g., "A woman shouldn't try to have a career and a family, too." Each item was scored on a range from 0 to 5. An item score of 0 indicates no discrimination while a score of 5 indicates a high level of discrimination.

The present form of the instrument was developed from a pool of twenty-six items that were categorized as reactions to role change by three researchers. These items were then administered to an earlier sample of 64 graduate students in an institution of higher learning. A rotated factor analysis was used to identify items that measured attitudinal constructs related to role change. The four items that did not load on any of the factors with a loading of at least .40 were eliminated. Reliability for the twenty-two items on the final version of the scale was .78.

The factor analysis identified four factors for the instrument. Eleven of the twenty-two items loaded on factor one, "Changes in the 'Status Quo'." Examples of factor one items are "women should

not think themselves equal to men," "professional women tend to be too aggressive," and "people who talk about putting women in the same positions as men are too radical." Factor two included items which dealt with professions in which men and women are under-represented and should seek more male/female applicants equalization. The three items on Factor three dealt with reactions to female aspirations ("I would not like to work under a woman supervisor," "A woman shouldn't try to have a career and family, too," etc.) Since factors two and three included only two and three items respectively, the hypothesis tested in this study excluded them.

Treatment

The scale was administered during regular class time by each instructor as an introduction to a unit on prejudice and discrimination. Test directions for the subjects were included with the test.

Analysis of variance was used to determine sex and race differences on responses to the total scale and for the two main factors. Scheffé's post-hoc contrasts were used to analyze the differences in means for white males, black males, white females, and black females.

Results

The means for the four groups on the total scale were 31.03 for white males, 19.42 for white females, 41.5 for black males and 22.68 for black females. The higher the score on the instrument, the greater is the prejudice toward role change for females (see Table One).

Of the four groups, only white females scored below the 50th percentile score of 22, with the mean score for black females at the 50th percentile ($\bar{X}$ = 22.68). In contrast, black males exhibited a high degree of prejudice toward female role change, with a mean score considerably above the 75th percentile score of 35 ($\bar{X}$ = 41). Although white males scored higher than either white or black females, by far the greatest degree of prejudice was expressed by the black males.

Black males also scored the highest ($\bar{X}$ - 26.73) on factor one, "Changes in the 'Status Quo'" and factor four, "Female Aspirations" ($\bar{X}$ = 6.90). However, white males scored the highest on factor two, "Equalization of Representation," ($\bar{X}$ = 6.27) and black females scored the highest on factor three, "Leadership Roles" ($\bar{X}$ = 5.86).

Based on the analysis of variance of mean scores, the researchers failed to accept both hypotheses. For the total scale (hypothesis one), the data analysis indicated significant differences between groups, $F = 13.242$, $df = 3,82$, $p < .0001$. Significant differences between groups were also found for factor one, $F = 16.19$, df 3,82, $p < .001$ and for factor four, $F = 2.73$, df 3,82, $p < .05$ (hypothesis two).

With regard to the total scale, three of the six Scheffé posthoc contrasts across the four groups were significant: white males differed significantly from white females, white females contrasted significantly with black males, and black males differed significantly from black females. Three of the four contrasts across sex were significant (white males versus white females, white females versus

black males, and black males versus black females); but only one of the four contrasts across race was significant (white females versus black males).

Two contrasts significant on the total scale were also significant for factor one. But the contrast between white males was non-significant while white males contrasted significantly with black males. While the F-ratio was significant on factor four, neither a significant difference between the races nor an interaction effect existed; none of the contrasts was significant by the conservative Scheffé method.

Conclusions

Administration of the sex discrimination scale indicated that "sex discrimination" is not a single entity. The data in this study indicate that prejudicial attitudes toward women are indicative of the threat perceived by subgroups in the population. For example, none of the subgroups strongly disagreed with the educational system's encouragement of little girls to be assertive (factor three, "Leadership Roles"). However, males, and particularly black males reacted strongly to items that indicated the independence and/or supervisory ability of women (factor one, "Resistance to the Status Quo").

Thus, efforts to combat attitudes hindering the economic advancement of women must be designed for the particular subgroup. More importantly, such efforts must deal with the personal and professional threat perceived as a result of economic role change for women.

Further research into sex discrimination should investigate the range of factors that contribute to prejudicial attitudes toward women. Specifically, further items should be developed on equalization of representation in professional and managerial settings and leadership roles since the present form of the scale includes so few items for each factor. In addition, the types of role change for which the greatest resistance exists should be pursued since males scored significantly higher than females on the factor "changes in the Status Quo." Of importance in reducing this type of prejudice would be the knowledge of whether disruption to family life or working for a female may be the chief contributor to the maintenance of the status quo.

Table One
Means and Standard Deviations
for Groups on Prejudice and Discrimination Scale

		Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Total
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS		(55)	(10)	(15)	(30)	(110)
WHITE MALES	$\bar{X}$	14.0	6.27	5.33	4.93	31.03
n = 15	S_x	9.07	2.79	3.22	5.69	12.22
BLACK MALES	$\bar{X}$	26.73	3.55	5.09	6.90	41.50
n = 11	S_x	9.70	2.50	2.98	4.31	11.39
WHITE FEMALES	$\bar{X}$	7.32	4.79	4.34	3.03	19.42
n = 38	S_x	8.16	3.03	3.39	3.27	11.46
BLACK FEMALES	$\bar{X}$	9.50	3.36	5.86	4.18	22.68
n = 22	S_x	7.50	3.09	2.57	3.76	9.16

Table Two
Scheffe Contrasts for Means by Groups
for Prejudice and Discrimination Scale

	Factor 1	Total Scale
CONTRAST 1 WM vs. WF	2.61	3.15*
CONTRAST 2 WM vs. BM	-1.57	-2.81
CONTRAST 3 WM vs. BF	3.78*	1.95
CONTRAST 4 WF vs BM	-6.79*	-6.05*
CONTRAST 5 WF vs. BF	-.98	-1.19
CONTRAST 6 BM vs. BF	5.58*	4.80*

*$p < .05$

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